

The present invention concerns a device for closing an opening, of the type comprising a frame that delimits a pass-through access opening suitable for receiving a cover and which includes a frame hinge knuckle, the frame hinge knuckle having a hinge surface and a pass-through hinge knuckle opening, the frame having an outer side and an inner side.

5 The invention applies in particular to cast iron manholes for streets or sidewalks.

Known from the document EP-B-391 825 is a manhole that allows access to a network of underground pipes, such as a sewer system. This manhole includes an articulated cover mounted on a fixed frame by means of a hinge. Said hinge allows the cover to be lifted from the frame by pivoting around a hinge pin.

10 The hinge includes a hinge knuckle formed by a recess made in the frame. This recess is open upward and suitable for receiving a cover hinge knuckle provided on the cover.

Furthermore, the manhole is provided with means for locking the cover in a secure open position in which the cover cannot be closed again accidentally.

15 To that end, the recess of the frame comprises a through-hole which delimits the application surfaces of the cover hinge knuckle in its open position.

Because the recess includes a through-hole, this manhole is not completely watertight. Consequently, rainwater can penetrate into the sewer system and flood it.

A purpose of the invention, therefore, is to remedy this disadvantage and to propose a  
20 road maintenance device that has a better seal against runoff waters.

To that end, a purpose of the invention is a device of the above-mentioned type, characterized in that the device also includes an inserted plug positioned in a recess of the frame hinge knuckle located on the inner side of the hinge surface and which makes the inner side of the frame hinge knuckle appreciably sealed off from the outside.

5        According to particular forms of embodiment of the invention, the device includes one or more of the following characteristics:

- the plug is made from an elastically deformable material, particularly of one single piece, and especially of elastomer;
- the plug comprises an exterior side, turned toward the hinge surface and means of  
10    evacuating dirt accumulated on the outer side of the plug;
- the means of evacuating dirt comprise at least one elastically deformable element that is movable between a blocking position in which it blocks the recess and retains the accumulated dirt on the outer side of the plug, and a pass-through position in which it opens the recess and allows the dirt to be evacuated from the outer side toward the inner side of the  
15    frame through the hinge knuckle opening;
- the frame extends along a frame plane and the movable element comprises at least a movable sealing lip bending around an axis positioned parallel to the frame plane;
- the hinge knuckle opening delimits at least a blocking surface of the cover in an open position;
- 20    • moreover, the device comprises a cover suitable for closing off the access opening, the cover being able to be moved between open and

closed positions and including a cover hinge knuckle that cooperates with the frame hinge knuckle;

- the cover hinge knuckle is suitable for taking the movable element to its pass-through position when the cover is taken to its open position and when the amount of dirt has exceeded a predetermined threshold; and
- the device is a manhole.

The invention will be better understood from the following description, given solely by way of example, and with reference to the attached drawings in which:

- Figure 1 is a transverse cross section of a part of a manhole according to the invention, the cover being in a closed configuration; and
- Figure 2 is a view similar to Figure 1, the cover being in an open blocking configuration.

Represented in Figure 1 is a manhole according to the invention, designated by the general reference of 2.

This manhole 2 includes a frame 4 and a cover 6, made of cast iron. The cover 6 is articulated with reference to the frame 4 around a generally horizontal axis X-X. The frame 4 extends along an appreciably horizontal frame plane C-C and includes a base body 8 that delimits a circular opening 10. When the manhole 2 is installed, this circular opening 10 is placed in line with a pipe 11 or a well with a generally vertical axis. The manhole 2 comprises an outer side opposite the pipe 11, at the top in the Figures, as well as an inner side toward the pipe 11, at the bottom in the Figures.

The base body 8 includes, on the side radially inside the opening 10, an internal peripheral projection 12, on which an elastomer gasket 14 is positioned. The outer surface of the gasket 14 is used as

the support surface for the cover 6 when said cover is in the closed position.

The cover 6 generally has a circular disk shape, the diameter of which corresponds approximately with the diameter of the opening 10.

The manhole 2 also includes at its periphery a hinge 16 that connects the cover 6 to  
5 the base body 8 and provides the articulation of the cover 6 with reference to the frame 4  
around the axis X-X. Thus, the cover 6 can be moved between a closed position in which the  
cover is generally horizontal (Figure 1) and a fully open position in which the cover 6 is swung  
about 130° with reference to its closed position, the cover 6 also being able to occupy an  
open blocking position in which it makes an angle of between about 90° and 110° with  
10 respect to its closed position (Figure 2).

The hinge 16 can have a closing configuration as well as various opening  
configurations, one of which is an open blocking configuration, which correspond to the  
above-mentioned positions of the cover 6.

The hinge 16 includes a frame knuckle 18, integral with the frame 4, and a cover  
15 knuckle 20, integral with the cover 6.

In this instance the hinge knuckle of the cover 20 is comprised of a protrusion 22 of the  
cover 6 which extends parallel to the plane of the cover 6 and which is terminated by a pivot  
24.

The frame hinge knuckle 18 includes an outer recess 19 which is open to the external  
20 side and which includes first 30, second 32 and third domains 34.

The first domain 30 is adjacent to the opening 10 and is suitable for receiving a portion  
of the protrusion 22

adjacent to the cover 6, when said cover is in the closed position.

The second domain 32 is separated from the first domain 30 and includes a bottom profile 38 in the shape of a partial cylinder with circular cross section, the axis of which coincides with the axis X-X. This bottom profile 38 forms a hinge surface forming [a] cam for  
5 the pivot 24.

The third domain 34 is positioned between the first 30 and second 32 domains. This third domain 34 includes a pass-through hinge knuckle opening 40. This opening 40 is suitable for receiving the pivot 24 when the hinge 16 is in the open blocking configuration (Figure 2). The pass-through opening 40 extends from the inner side of the hinge surface 38.  
10 The pass-through opening 40 forms, at the interface between the three domains 30, 32, 34, two flat blocking surfaces 42, 44 which extend vertically and parallel to the axis X-X and which enable the cover 6 to be locked in the open blocking position so that it cannot be closed again accidentally.

The hinge 16 is of a known type and is described in detail in the above-mentioned  
15 document EP-B-391 825.

Moreover, a receiving recess 50 is made in the ~~in the~~ frame hinge knuckle 18, said receiving recess 50 including an inserted plug 52.

The receiving recess 50 is positioned on the inner side of the pass-through opening 40, adjacent thereto, so that the pass-through opening 40 opens out into said inner recess  
20 50.

The recess 50 is delimited on the one hand by a peripheral wall 54 that extends parallel to the wall of the pass-through opening 40 and which encloses said opening, and on the other hand by a bottom wall 56 extending parallel to the plane C-C.

The plug 52 includes a peripheral wall 60, and positioned approximately at mid-height thereof, a central membrane 62. The peripheral wall 60 is applied elastically and sealably against the peripheral wall 54 of the receiving recess 50 and goes completely around said recess. It should be noted that the peripheral wall 60 is slightly compressed by the peripheral wall 54. Said peripheral wall 60 forms a passage 64 extending from the pass-through opening 40 toward the interior.

The central membrane 62 is flexible and extends appreciably parallel to the plane C-C over all of the transverse section of the passage 64. The central membrane 62 includes a median groove 66 which divides the membrane 62 into two sealing lips 68, each of which lips is integral with the peripheral wall 60 only by one single edge.

Each sealing lip 68 is flexibly movable around an axis Y-Y, respectively Z-Z, between a blocking position (Figure 1) and a pass-through position (Figure 2).

In their blocking position, the ends of the sealing lips 68 abut against each other and close off the passage 64, making the inner side of the frame hinge knuckle 18 appreciably sealed off from the exterior.

In their pass-through position, the sealing lips 68 are separated from each other and allow dirt such as gravel 70 to pass through.

It should be noted that the central membrane 62 is positioned in such a way that the pivot 24 extends a distance  $d$  from the membrane when the hinge 16 is in the open and blocking configuration.

The outer part of the peripheral wall 60 and the central membrane 62 delimit a container for dirt in which the gravel 70, for example, can accumulate.

The plug 52 is manufactured economically, preferably from a single piece, by molding elastically deformable material. A particularly suitable material, for example, is an elastomer such as EPDM (ethylene-propylene-diene copolymer) or SBR (styrene-butadiene rubber). Preferably the material of the plug has a Shore hardness of between 50° and 70°.

5 The manhole according to the invention functions as follows.

Initially, the cover 6 is in the closed configuration (Figure 1).

The pivot 24 extends into the upper part of the frame hinge knuckle 18, and the cover 6 extends generally horizontally.

10 The gravel 70 that enters into the frame hinge knuckle 18 from the outside is located on the membrane 62 in the dirt container, and the gravel forms a pile, the height  $h$  of which is greater than the distance  $d$ . The sealing lips 68 are in their blocking position.

When it rains, the water accumulates in the frame hinge knuckle 18 and in the dirt container, most of this flow of water being prevented from penetrating into the pipe 11 or into the well through the passage 64. This considerably reduces the flooding of the underground  
15 sewer system by this rainwater.

When the cover 6 is swung into its open blocking position, the pivot 24 penetrates into the pass-through opening 40 of the third domain 34 and is applied on the blocking surfaces 42, 44 in order to block the cover 6 in this open position.

20 When the pivot 24 is inserted into the opening 40, it presses against the gravel 70 which transmits the force of pressure to the sealing lips 68. They in turn are deflected inward and thus take

their pass-through position, allowing the gravel 70 to be evacuated by falling through the passage 64. When enough gravel 70 has fallen through the passage, the sealing lips 68 reclose due to their own elasticity and again provide a seal.

Consequently, as a result of the flexible lips 68, dirt that may accumulate in the frame  
5 hinge knuckle 18 does not prevent the holding of the cover 6 in the locked open position.

It should be noted that the invention can also be applied in the domain of traps intended to close technical inspection chambers for underground wired networks when the closure covers are articulated and it is desired to prevent the penetration of rainwater through the hinge into these technical chambers.